

Wyoming

(Source: *Wyoming Social Studies Content and Performance Standards, 1999*, Wyoming Department of Education)

The five criteria: An overview

Are the essentials of a civic core specified clearly?	Are the topics teachable within the allotted timeframe?	Do the documents provide a scope and sequence?	Is the essential content required of all students?	Are the important facts and ideas presented coherently across subjects?
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Standards that largely meet the criteria are designated with a full star [★]; standards that partially meet the criteria are designated with a half star [☆]; and standards that do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

Summary:

This document meets no criterion for the political education of citizens. On Criterion #1, there are but four specifics: the Declaration of Independence, the Wyoming and U.S. Constitutions, and the Bill of Rights. On Criteria #2 and #3, abstract benchmarks at grades four, eight, and eleven give no guidance about the time it would take to fulfill them and none to the scope and sequence of courses. The introductory “Rationale” says “standards do not prescribe curriculum, courses, or instructional methodology,” which “will be addressed, assessed, and documented at grade levels and times determined by local districts.” On Criterion #4, no common core of skills and knowledge is visible. It is nonetheless claimed that “Students who graduate from a Wyoming public high school in the year 2004 and thereafter must demonstrate mastery of these standards to earn a high school diploma.” On Criterion #5, there is no subject matter content to be integrated.

Particulars:

There are seven strands, titled “Standards:” citizenship, government, and democracy; cultural diversity; production, distribution, consumption; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; social studies processes and skills; and technology. Under each strand/standard is a column of “Benchmarks” for grades four, eight, and eleven, and a second column of “Performance Standards Level Descriptors” that are no more specific than the benchmarks. The three levels are “Advanced Performance,” “Proficient Performance,” and “Partially Proficient Performance.”

As elsewhere, civics comes closest to specificity. One benchmark says “explain the historical development of the U.S. Constitution and how it shaped Wyoming and U.S. governmental systems.” Advanced performance says “make complex connections between the historical development of the U.S. Constitution and the government systems of Wyoming and the United States.” Proficient performance drops “complex.” Partially proficient has students “describe, with guidance, the connections.”

There are no specific terms under other standards. For an eleventh-grade course in culture and cultural diversity, “Students communicate how personal identity is shaped by and impacts culture, groups, institutions, and world events.” The performance descriptor asks “how cultural

influences and diversity have influenced groups, institutions, and world events.” History benchmarks mention neither U.S. nor world history. Grade eleven says “explain how history, government, cultures, and economics have contributed to the interpretation of the past and present, and assist in planning for the future.” At the grade eight level, students are asked to “identify people, events, problems, conflicts, and ideas and explain their historical significance.”

The introduction says thirteen national and state standards were used by many educators and citizens in regional and state meetings to “establish the rigor” of the Wyoming standards. Unfortunately there is little evidence of such consultation here. The final product can at best be described casual, unfocused, and unhelpful for guiding classroom instruction.